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Tailoring Teaching Instructions According to Student's Different Learning Styles: Are We Hitting the Right Button?

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ABSTRACT

To address the diverse preferred learning styles, one of the oft-cited recommendations for educators is to tailor teaching instructions accordingly. This pedagogy however, lacks scientific evidences. Furthermore, in medical curriculum, tailoring instructions according to preferred learning styles is not pragmatic. This is because different subjects and in different settings matter may be best delivered in specific delivery mode. Furthermore, patients' presentations are often multi-sensorial. As such, the onus is on the students themselves to adjust the amount of learning efforts they put in according to their preferred or not preferred learning styles.

Keywords: *Learning styles, Fleming's VARK model, Teaching instructions, Meshing hypothesis, Medical curriculum*

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Introduction

One of the oft-quoted elements in student diversity is the different preferred learning styles among students. A number of theories on learning styles have been put forth but the common denominator undergirding all these theories is the notion that different people learn and think differently and therefore, learning can be optimised if the pedagogy is tailored accordingly (1). An early model on learning style is called the experiential learning model developed by David Kolb. Kolb described learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (2). He also outlined four learning styles, viz., the divergers, the assimilators, the convergers and the accommodators (see Table 1 for brief

descriptions of these four learning styles) and outlines six learning propositions (2):

1. Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
2. Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience.
3. Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation.
5. Learning results from synergistic transactions between the person and the environment.
6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge